

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER  
GOVERNOR



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JOHN BOHLINGER  
LT. GOVERNOR

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House Education

HJ-54 Testimony

Good afternoon Chairman Jore and members of the committee. My name is Jan Lombardi and I am Governor Schweitzer's Education Policy Advisor. I submit testimony to express the Governor's support of House Joint Resolution 54 sponsored by Representative Windy Boy. I want to thank Representative Windy Boy for bringing this important issue before the legislature. We greatly appreciate Representative Windy Boy's service on the Governor's Kindergarten to College Advisory Council and the dedication that he has shown to improving educational opportunities for all of Montana's students.

The transferability of credits among Montana's institutions of higher education is vital to Montana's students. Times are changing and our students are on the move—a student who begins her college education in Billings might finish in Bozeman, Great Falls in Browning, Missoula in Dillon; we need to provide these students the reassurance that their credits will move with them. This bill calls for an interim study on the transferability of credits from one institution to another among and between Montana University System institutions and Montana's seven tribal colleges. This is unique in that it includes all public colleges recognizing that Montana's students choose from the many higher education options within this great state.

Ensuring the transferability of credits from high school to college is another crucial part of this study bill. More and more of Montana's high schools and their students are coming to realize the often overlooked benefits of enrolling in college courses while still in high school, a trend known as dual enrollment. Dual enrollment not only saves these students money on their college coursework, but with

one foot in high school and the other in college it allows students the benefit of seeing themselves succeeding in a college environment early on. These successes, especially to first generation college students, are often important predictors of their college successes to come.

This legislature has placed the issue of transferability under much scrutiny as is seen by the budget focus that has been brought forth in SB566 on behalf of the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education and the PEPB interim committee. I ask you to validate the research that your fellow legislators have put forth by voting yes on this bill. This bill calls for an interim study of the transferability of credits from high school to college and among Montana's public and tribal institutions of higher education; the results of this research will be presented to the 61<sup>st</sup> Legislature. There is no funding attached to this bill, only a sincere request that our legislators look into this important issue. Thank you Representative Windy Boy for bringing this resolution forward. Chairman Jore and members of the committee, I urge your support on House Joint Resolution 54.